

Stop imperialist war on Libya

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By Fred Goldstein

The right-wing, imperialist Italian government headed by Silvio Berlusconi has joined France, Qatar and Kuwait in recognizing the so-called “rebel” Libyan National Transitional Council.

The recognition comes after chief executive officer Paolo Scaroni of Italy’s giant oil monopoly, Eni, met with council members to discuss reviving the company’s access to oil production now in “rebel” territory.

Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini, referring to Scaroni, said: “He had important meetings on restarting cooperation about energy.

“Rome’s support is a boost to rebel forces because Italy is Libya’s largest trading partner and the biggest buyer of the North African country’s oil and natural gas supplies.” (Wall Street Journal, April 4)

This move by the Italian government serves to highlight what is behind this brutal, illegal and unprovoked aggression by the entire array of Western imperialist powers and their hangers-on. They are using massive military might in an attempt to overthrow the sovereign government of an underdeveloped, oil-rich country of 6.5 million people.

Colonial reconquest the aim

Backed by U.S. imperialism, the ruling classes of Italy, France and Britain, all former colonial masters in Libya, are seeking to recolonize the country. They want to do to Libya what they did to Iraq and what they are itching to do to Iran. They want to take back the oil, which was nationalized by these country’s revolutions. They want to re-establish military bases that were shut down by the revolutions and to install client regimes that will subordinate the country’s wealth and labor to imperialist corporate interests. All else is lies and deception.

Italy carried out the brutal occupation and colonization of Libya from 1911 to 1943, when it was ousted by the British, French and U.S. at the end of World War II. When these powers set up a Libyan state in 1951, they did so to allow Britain, France and the U.S. to each retain military bases and corporate interests there.

Britain kept the bases and political dominance in the east, bordering its former colony Egypt, where

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Part of coast to coast April 4 solidarity

Workers shut ports

By LeiLani Dowell

On the 43rd anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., workers shut down the ports of San Francisco and Oakland, Calif., for 24 hours as part of a national day of solidarity with Wisconsin workers and workers who are fighting union busting.

According to Clarence Thomas, a dockworker, union activist and executive board member of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10, dockworkers unanimously agreed to honor a national call for a “no business as usual” day on April 4 in support of public sector workers in Wisconsin

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Idle cranes and trucks in Oakland, Calif., on April 4.

PHOTO: DELORES LEMON THOMAS



Student protest in Philadelphia, March 30.

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Whitby supporters step up campaign to win her release

By Sharon Danann
Cleveland

Supporters of wrongfully imprisoned Rebecca Whitby succeeded in catching the attention of people on April 3 at the last night of the Cleveland International Film Festival by doing a line dance to a song protesting racist incarceration called “Another Black Man Gone” by Jon Fromer. Family members are appealing for Whitby’s immediate release from the Ohio Reformatory for Women so that she can care for her 5-month-old daughter, A’Marhi, who has health problems.

Whitby has rejected proposals which would require her to essentially admit to acts she did not commit. The young African-American woman was accused of involuntarily assaulting one of two police officers with liquids expelled from her mouth when they assaulted her in April 2009. The officers stated that they were arresting her, but her offense was never established.

The guilty verdict was read Feb. 7 by Judge Daniel Gaul, not by the jury foreperson, as is customary. Whitby was found not guilty of seven out of nine charges. Although the jury did not contradict the judge’s inclusion of convictions on two counts, there was visible consternation on their part.

Whitby’s aunt, Marva Patterson, told this reporter, “Judge Gaul is utterly without scruples. He has no respect for canon law. A complaint previously filed against Gaul in the Joaquin Hicks case called for him to be removed from the case and removed from the bench due to bias and the inability to render an ethical and just decision.”

In spite of a request by Whitby’s family for an investigation into the use of excessive police force against her, including the use of racist epithets, there has not been a report of findings nor have the officers been charged yet.

The Whitby case is laden with political machinations; therefore, the family has carefully chosen an attorney for the appeal. Funds are being collected for the necessary investigative and legal work. Supporters ask that contributions be sent to Tyresha Brown-O’Neal, c/o Workers World Party, P.O. Box 5963, Cleveland, OH 44101.

To send messages of support, write to Rebecca Whitby, #80920, MCC ORW, 1479 Collins Ave., Marysville OH 43040. She can also be emailed through the JPay



From left, Marva Patterson, Ada Averyhart, Don Bryant and Sharon Danann dance their support for Rebecca Whitby in Cleveland.

Ohio email services using her prisoner number.

Concerned people are also asked to contact Will Eleby, Chief, Bureau of Classification, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, 770 W. Broad St., Columbus OH 43222; or call 614-752-1106. Make sure to include Whitby’s prisoner number.

Ask Eleby to release Whitby on a hardship basis so that she can care for her sick baby. Or, as a less desirable alternative, ask Eleby to have Whitby transferred to the Northeast Pre-Release Center in Cleveland so that her family can bring her baby to visit. The Marysville prison where Whitby is now is a three-hour drive from Cleveland.

Six cops recently charged with excessive force

Almost two years of protesting Whitby’s brutal beating by the police — with chants such as “Charge the cops” — may have encouraged the reporting of recent instances of excessive force by Cleveland police officers. In both cases the beatings also happened to be caught on videotape.

On Feb. 24 and March 2, two female officers were charged with misdemeanor assault, obstruction of official business and several other misdemeanors after hitting a handcuffed female inmate Dec. 27. A police spokesperson stated that the prisoner’s injuries were not serious.

On March 18, four officers were charged with felonious assault and obstruction of official business after beating the handcuffed Edward Henderson on Jan. 1. Henderson sustained a broken eye socket, broken nose and detached retina. The officers have pleaded not guilty.

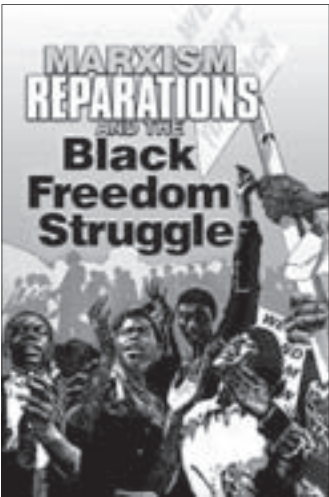
Free Rebecca Whitby! Tear down the walls! □

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

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GRAPHIC BY SAHU BARRON

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Wisconsin struggle continues

Milwaukee march hits racism, union busting

By Bryan G. Pfeifer

In a historic merging of the union movement and the Civil Rights Movement, the Rev. Jesse Jackson Jr. and two leaders of the 1968 Memphis strike led “A March Fit for a King” down Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd. in Milwaukee April 2.

The march — which included people of various nationalities, ages, genders and sexual identities — was named in honor of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis. Marching alongside Jackson were Baxter Leach and Elmore Nickleberry, sanitation workers who had invited King to Memphis to support their struggle for collective bargaining rights for their union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 1733.

“We were proud to invite Dr. King to support our sanitation workers’ strike in 1968; we are proud to be here with Rev. Jackson today in Milwaukee. Everybody deserves dignity and their basic rights and we are happy to lend our support,” said Leach and Nickleberry in a statement for the march.

Milwaukee is the most segregated city in the U.S., with many apartheid-like conditions for the Black community. One out of every two Black men in Milwaukee is currently unable to find living-wage employment. Infant mortality in the African-American community is 19 per 1,000 live births, higher than in the Gaza Strip.

“Segregated cities lead to segregated results,” said Rev. Jackson. “It’s no mystery why there is such a divide in the city’s economic and political structures, unemployment, health care, education, and affordable housing. It’s time to turn pain into power.” (www.rainbowpush.org)

Mass resistance stops anti-union law

The April 2 march is part of a struggle in Wisconsin which has been raging ever since Feb. 11 when Gov. Scott Walker — at the behest of the banks, corporations

and the Pentagon — proposed his “budget repair bill,” which, if it took effect, would essentially eliminate collective bargaining for up to 200,00 public sector workers in the state.

Mass resistance — including the weeks-long occupation of the state Capitol by thousands of workers and youth as well as demonstrations of hundreds of thousands — meant Walker was unable to achieve his full budget repair bill. Walker and the legislature then attempted to carve out alleged non-fiscal items from the original bill, creating another illegal bill that the Wisconsin legislature rammed through on March 9 and 10 and that Walker signed on March 11.

But a state judge has ruled, not once but three times, that the legislative vote was illegal, and has issued an injunction barring implementation of the law. The governor and the Republican majority twice ignored the court order by proceeding to stop dues check-off and increase pensions and health-care costs for state workers. But on their third try the state judge threatened contempt charges if they ignored the court order again. The anti-union bill signed by Walker can’t be legally implemented under the injunction. The Walker administration appealed the judge’s injunction to the Wisconsin Court of Appeals, but this court declined to hear the case and sent it to the state’s Supreme Court.

During the hearings members of progressive organizations such as Wisconsin Resists packed the court. Other organizations are also putting pressure on the courts, including some unions which are suing the state on various grounds.

Across Wisconsin protest actions small and large take place daily. Worksite leafletting, town hall and neighborhood meetings and recall campaigns are in motion. Solidarity demonstrations with Wisconsin are taking place across the world. Delegations,



WW PHOTO: JILL HILL

consin can be found at www.defendwisconsin.org.

Jill Hill of Workers World in Chicago has been in Wisconsin numerous times since early February, including participating in the occupation of the state Capitol in Madison and the April 4 action in Milwaukee. “I’m here to support the struggle of the workers to maintain their bargaining rights, their rights to negotiate contracts. We also need to get the money for education and social

services, not off the backs of the workers, but from the banks and the Pentagon. There’s plenty of money in this country, but it needs to be used for meeting people’s needs, not as profits for the rich.”

Hill, who teaches at the City Colleges of Chicago, brought solidarity messages to Wisconsin from there. “The students and faculty are also being attacked by the education cuts in Illinois. What’s happening in Wisconsin is just the cutting edge of what’s happening around the country. So it’s very important to have solidarity, to have people gathered together to join in this fight together.

“The support that’s been coming in to Wisconsin from all around the country is really unbelievable,” said Hill. “You can feel the solidarity each day as more and more people are pouring in. There are workers from Michigan, North Carolina, Illinois, from all over the country. And there’s the solidarity demonstrations happening across the country. It’s been an amazing demonstration of solidarity with all the workers, students, community people who are feeling the economic crisis as their lives become worsened through unemployment, layoffs and other attacks by the rich.”

For more information and how to help, visit www.wisafclcio.org, wisafclcio.typepad.com or bailoutpeople.org. □

Philadelphia students: Education not incarceration

By Joseph Piette
Philadelphia

Demanding “education not incarceration,” more than 2,000 college and high school students marched against Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett’s plans to cut \$1 billion in state funding for education.

Hundreds of high school students from Sayre, Bok, Furness, South Philadelphia, Kensington, Paul Robeson, CAPA, West, Bodine, Edison, Sankofa Freedom Academy — from 25 high schools in all — massed in front of the city’s main courthouse on March 30. They chanted “No education, no life” as students kept coming in, arriving by mass transit or by foot after schools let out.

The diverse crowd doubled, than tripled as students from Penn State, Temple and other local colleges joined in. They had earlier marched from Temple University to the State Office Building to protest proposed cuts affecting university education, then walked another half mile to join their brothers and sisters at the Criminal Justice Center.

According to a nearby plaque, today’s

protest took place near the site where the great labor organizer Mother Jones began “The March of the Factory Children.” In July 1903, some 200 youth walked from Philadelphia to New York City “to dramatize the need for child labor legislation.”

On their banner was the demand “We want more schools and less hospitals.” The hospitals referred to where children ended up from the injuries they suffered in dangerous but profitable factory conditions.

Over 100 years later, today’s youth were chanting “More classmates, less inmates” because the proposed budget includes an 11 percent increase in funds for inhuman but profitable prisons while school funding is slashed.

Many students have loved ones in prison, often for petty, nonviolent crimes. The students know the latest cuts will inevitably push more young people into the school-to-prison pipeline. They will also eliminate opportunities for youth to access higher education and cut badly needed jobs and services from their schools.

Pennsylvania’s prison population has already grown from 8,200 in 1980 to



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

51,500 in 2010. In addition, the annual cost per inmate in that period has grown from \$11,400 to more than \$32,000. While most states are reducing prison populations and shutting down prisons, Pennsylvania is continuing to increase incarceration rates.

Among the groups that organized today’s protest were the Campaign for Non-violent Schools, Service Employees Local 32 BJ, UNITE HERE Local 634, Parent

Power, Action United, One Love Movement, Our City Our Schools, Youth Art and Self-Empowerment Project, Urban Nutrition Initiative, Media Mobilizing Project and the Philadelphia Student Union.

As the march passed by a taxi stand on the way to the final rally at the School District Headquarters, cabdrivers in waiting cabs sounded their horns in solidarity. Many vehicles were decorated with pro-education signs. □

Attacks on choice part of anti-worker agenda

By Kathy Durkin

And the beat goes on. Right-wing, pro-corporate politicians continue their attacks on working and poor people across the country. At the same time, they are escalating their war on women’s rights and health care, but not without resistance.

Right-wing legislators, buoyed by the Tea Party, are pursuing their ideological agenda in Congress, and where they can muster the votes in state legislatures, they seek to impose outrageous restrictions on women’s reproductive rights, even tying them to budgetary bills. In this year alone, 351 bills have been proposed which severely limit women’s right to not only abortion but birth control. This is on top of existing restrictive laws.

Since Jan. 1, Republican legislators have aggressively sought to limit women’s access to abortion and contraception, led by House Speaker John Boehner. They have proposed numerous state bills to stop government funding of all abortions or to place more limitations and obstacles for women to navigate in order to obtain them. Ten states have bills pending that would require pregnant women to watch pre-abortion ultrasounds, although they’re near defeat in Montana and Kentucky.

Other anti-choice measures go further. Some laws, such as Idaho’s, would criminalize violations of abortion restrictions, even jailing doctors. In Utah, women who have miscarried could face homicide charges. A few state bills would even legalize violence against abortion providers.

South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard signed the most intrusive and restrictive anti-abortion

law in the country on March 22. It calls for a three-day waiting period — the longest of any state — between an initial medical consultation and an abortion. It also imposes mandatory “counseling,” including for rape survivors, via lectures filled with medical misinformation, from unqualified, religious-based abortion opponents at bogus “pregnancy centers.” Their sole aim is to frighten women and stop them from making their own decisions and accessing legal medical procedures.

This law imposes even more hardships for women with few resources, who have to travel far to reach the Planned Parenthood facility in Sioux Falls and/or find housing for several days. Doctors fly in from other states only once a week to perform abortions.

Right-wing politicians have also stepped up their anti-woman propaganda as part of their rabid campaign to eliminate women’s reproductive rights. An example of this occurred just prior to the March 30 Indiana House vote on a bill restricting abortions. State Rep. Eric Turner outrageously charged that women would falsify incidents of rape or incest to obtain procedures. The ban on abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy passed, with no rape or incest exceptions.

Women in motion to defend rights

These attacks shouldn’t be viewed in isolation. Part of the ruling class’s offensive against working and poor people’s rights, they occur as governments at all levels are laying siege to “entitlement programs” allegedly to make up for budget deficits. Family planning and other health care, childcare,

public housing and food stamp programs — all necessities for low-income women and their families — are being axed as banks and corporations get billions of dollars, the super-rich get away with not paying taxes, and the Pentagon’s budget swells.

The government is carrying out a war on women, putting the worst burdens on low-income women during an economic crisis, limiting options, and creating more obstacles for them. Those most harmed by legal restrictions and cutbacks in reproductive health care services are young, working-class and low-income women, those from African-American, Latina and other oppressed communities, and rural residents.

More measures are coming, as the ultra-right is hell-bent on overturning women’s reproductive rights. Yet they are not proceeding unchallenged; fightbacks are being organized in every state. Progressive forces have stopped some regressive laws and prevented reactionaries from shutting down women’s health clinics in several states.

Pro-choice organizations are legally challenging restrictive laws, while they pressure state legislators. On April 7, a Pro-Choice Lobby Day in Washington, D.C., will pressure Congress not to vote the next day to defund Planned Parenthood and other vital programs for low-income women.

Women workers are in motion now to defend their rights. They won’t take these attacks without a struggle. It wouldn’t be surprising if women start occupying state Capitol buildings, as Wisconsin public sector workers did, to say NO to these assaults on their basic rights. □



Women’s case vs. Wal-Mart goes to Supreme Court

Hundreds of workers, women’s rights activists and labor allies demonstrated on the steps of the Supreme Court on March 29 chanting, “Wal-Mart women deserve fair pay! Hear their case without delay!” They were standing up for more than 1 million women employees who 10 years ago charged Wal-Mart with discrimination over pay and promotions. The court heard arguments on whether allegations of systemic discrimination by the billion-dollar global retailer constitute a class-action lawsuit. One Wal-Mart employee from New Jersey told the online newsletter Union City that she had witnessed male managers say things like, “If you wear a lower-cut blouse, you might get a promotion.” (Metro D.C. AFL-CIO online newsletter, March 30) The National Women’s Law Center, which co-authored an amicus brief in the case on behalf of 32 other organizations, issued a statement affirming “why the sexist treatment of Wal-Mart’s female employees was clearly discriminatory and why the case is so important to working women everywhere.” It added that if the Supreme Court agrees to let the case proceed as the largest class action in history, it “will send an important message that no company is too big or too powerful to be held accountable.” (NWLC online release, March 30)

Faculty at U.Wis.-River Falls votes union

Outraged by Gov. Scott Walker’s attack on collective bargaining, faculty at another University of Wisconsin campus, this time at River Falls, voted 148 to 16 on March 24 to join AFT-Wisconsin, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers. “Our strength cannot be legislated away. Our strength is, and always has been, our collective voice — a voice that is stronger than ever,” said UW-RF political science professor Wes Chapin. UW faculty and academic staff fought for years to win the freedom to bargain collectively, which they finally achieved in 2009. Now faculty at five UW campuses (La Crosse joined on Feb. 24) have union representation. (blog.aflcio.org, March 24)

N.J. toll collectors defend jobs with sit-in

The more than 600 union workers who collect tolls on the New Jersey Turnpike and the Garden State Parkway are under attack. Gov. Chris Christie wants to privatize their jobs. When the New Jersey Turnpike Authority refused to negotiate with the Technical Engineers union Local 194 on March 29, about 50 IFPTE members staged a 40-minute sit-in with chants of “Negotiate, don’t dictate!” Their contract runs out June 30. On March 24 the IFPTE filed a suit to stop any vote or action toward privatization without first negotiating with the union, which has offered \$16 million in concessions. Under a privatized system, toll collectors would make about \$25,000 a year, which would be about \$40,000 less than current wages. (N.J. Star-Ledger, March 29)

Revised air & rail union election rules nixed

It was no April Fools joke when the House of Representatives voted April 1 to repeal last year’s ruling from the National Mediation Board. The NMB ruled that elections for air and rail workers should be decided like other union elections — by a majority of the votes cast. (That ruling redressed a longtime reactionary law that any air or rail worker who did not vote in a union election was counted as a “no” vote.) The Communications Workers union, some of whose locals represent airline workers, issued a report the week of March 28 showing that not one member of Congress would have won the 2010 election if they had had to play by the same rules that Delta Airlines and FedEx want to impose on their workers! The White House announced March 30 that President Barack Obama would veto the bill. (blog.aflcio.org, March 28 and 31)

S.F. Labor Council endorses April 9-10 protests

On March 28 the San Francisco Labor Council unanimously endorsed a resolution that it join “the Bay Area Chapter of U.S. Labor Against the War and hundreds of social justice organizations nationwide calling for an immediate end to these wars, and endorsing the bicoastal marches and rallies occurring on April 9 in New York City and April 10 in San Francisco, sponsored by the United National Antiwar Committee.” The resolution detailed the tremendous financial drain imposed on working and oppressed people who are forced to pay for “a permanent war economy” while suffering from reduced services and attacks on collective bargaining rights. □

Union drivers to bosses: ‘We want to return to our rightful jobs’

By Martha Grevatt
Detroit

Until December of 2009, drivers employed by the Ryder company, members of United Auto Workers Local 174, moved parts from General Motors parts plants to its assembly plants in Hamtramck and Lake Orion, Mich. A month earlier drivers had begun getting layoff notices and by the end of the year, all of the union drivers were out of a job indefinitely. Since then nonunion drivers employed by OTR/LINC, a company owned by unpopular local billionaire Matty Maroun, have replaced them.

On April 4 the drivers took their case to UAW GM workers — members of Local 22 — and to the general public. Drivers and their supporters spent hours in

the rain conducting informational picketing. They charge GM and Ryder with collusion with the intent of breaking the union.

“You don’t have to go to Wisconsin. Union-busting Ryder is here,” was the leaflet’s headline. According to the drivers’ website, Ryder has refused to negotiate in good faith, has not offered drivers jobs with other Ryder accounts, has not offered severance pay and appears to be “blacklisting” union drivers. (www.swebber1.com)

Recognizing the drivers from when they helped each other move parts off the trucks, and having discussed the situation at their union meeting the day before, Local 22 members voiced their support and shook hands with their fellow union members.

The leaflet reminded the GM workers that “the Volt is the ‘Car of the Year’ because of the quality design, engineering and assembly by dedicated UAW members like you,” and urged workers to “make sure every nut, bolt, and part is perfect before it goes on the car!” The work-to-rule strategy was encouraged as an act of solidarity to pressure GM and Ryder to grant the drivers’ demand that they “return to our rightful jobs.”

Later in the evening, the drivers brought their signs to a city-wide vigil called by Metro Detroit AFL-CIO.

Eventually the campaign to get the 200-plus drivers rehired will move to the Lake Orion plant, where it appears that drivers working for a nonunion subcontractor will drive Ryder trucks. □

Marxist truth about the capitalist ‘recovery’

Millions jobless as low wages spread

By Fred Goldstein

The big-business pundits and politicians applaud every insignificant sign of economic recovery. Nevertheless, profound contradictions are built into the profit system — the so-called “free market” system. They are bound to create long-term mass unemployment and low wages on an ever-expanding scale.

Those profound contradictions will eventually lead to another major crisis.

Karl Marx discovered and explained the general law of capitalist accumulation. It is impossible to truly understand the jobless recovery without taking that into account. It is simply this: As capital grows, it becomes ever larger and more and more productive. Each capitalist enterprise needs fewer and fewer workers but larger and larger capital investments to create more and more goods and services (commodities).

As this process spreads throughout the capitalist economy, the bosses as a class have relatively less and less need for labor. The result is what Marx called the growing reserve army of unemployed.

Furthermore, capital becomes more and more productive as it creates enormous speed-up and intensified exploitation of workers through the use of increasingly modernized machinery — in our era, high technology and software. This lowers wages by making workers’ skills obsolete and allows the bosses to keep wages down.

These forces of capitalist accumulation can only be combated by the creation of unions and by the organized resistance of the working class and the oppressed on a society-wide level.

Worry behind the latest jobs report

The latest jobs report only emphasizes this process. The pathetic public cheers by Democratic Party politicians and the business media over 216,000 jobs said to have been created in March have been accompanied by worried whispers about the true nature of the economic situation.

According to official statistics, there are still 13.5 million unemployed. At this rate it would take until 2018 just to get back to 5 percent unemployment. However, 24.5 million workers are unemployed, on forced part-time work or have dropped out of the workforce. And these are official government statistics.

These numbers do not include millions more who are not counted at all for a variety of reasons — including those who have stopped looking for work for more than a year. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the workforce is now actually smaller than it was last year by half a million workers, yet the working-age population grew by 1.9 million in the last year.

Black workers, especially men and teen-

agers, as well as Latino/a workers, have actually gone backwards as far as participation in the workforce is concerned. If these workers were counted, according to Heidi Shierholz of the Economic Policy Institute, the official unemployment rate would be 9.8 percent right now instead of the 8.8 percent stated in the Bureau of Labor Statistics report for March.

And there are two other important statistics that did not make headlines. There are five times as many workers looking for work as there are available jobs. And 7.2 million fewer jobs are available now than at the beginning of this Great Recession. This is in addition to the fact that 3.9 million new workers have come into the workforce since 2007, when the crisis began. So the labor market is really short 11.2 million jobs.

Low-wage capitalism spreading

With the assault on the unions and the vast reservoir of unemployed workers, the bosses are having a field day at lowering wages.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the right-wing mouthpiece of big business, more than half of those full-time workers who lost their jobs from 2007 to 2009 and were able to find work again had to take a cut in pay. Some 36 percent of them had to take cuts of 20 percent or more.

Here’s an example: “After seven years working in regional sales in Southern California for Diebold Inc., a manufacturer of ATMs and security systems, Virginia May says she was earning \$30 an hour plus bonuses when she and 800 colleagues lost their jobs in early 2008. She took a seven-month stint with the Census Bureau last year, earning \$25 an hour, but struggled to find the same wage anywhere else. Ms. May says she turned down 10 job offers out of 58 interviews. One of them was as an office manager, similar to the job she had at Diebold, paying \$10 an hour.” (WSJ, Jan. 11)

This report, from the ultimate champion of capitalist exploitation, also pointed out that many of the low-wage jobs being created in the so-called “recovery” are in low-paying industries like restaurants, hotels, retail trade and health care.

Wider Opportunities for Women has studied the basics required for workers to stay alive. It shows that official government poverty levels are ridiculously low. WOW gave the example of Tara, a medical biller who makes \$15 an hour, while her husband, who works in building maintenance, makes \$11.50 an hour. They have three young sons.

The couple, who live in Jamaica, N.Y., in the borough of Queens, have to visit the River Fund Food Pantry every Saturday. “We tried to cut back on a lot of things,” they said, but they could not make ends meet. (New York Times, March 31)

Marxism on the worst jobless recovery since World War II

The big picture is that around 30 million workers are unemployed and underemployed, while tens of millions more are having their wages lowered or are entering or re-entering the workforce at poverty or near-poverty-level wages.

This is the result of the worst jobless recovery in the history of U.S. capitalism since the Great Depression.

According to the logic of Marx’s general law of capitalist accumulation, as capital grows it has relatively less need for labor. Thus it is clear that for capital to absorb the increasing reserve army of unemployed workers, the system must keep growing at a greater and greater rate with each business cycle.

But because of the continuous lowering of wages and the continuing increase in the productivity of labor, with more and more commodities being produced in less and less time, it is harder and harder for the capitalist economy to grow. In fact, the growth rate is steadily decreasing, not increasing.

Build a workers’ united front

The only way workers can escape mass unemployment under capitalism is for the

bosses to expand production and exploitation at a rapid rate — i.e., for the system to undergo dynamic growth. Under the profit system, if you cannot sell your labor to a boss, you cannot live. But if the bosses need fewer and fewer workers and if their system is stalling out because of its own contradictions, the only way out for the workers is to launch a mass struggle against unemployment and for decent, good-paying jobs.

It is time to demand that a job is a right. The right to a job is a right to live and should not depend on whether some boss — some exploiter who gets rich off the labor of the workers — decides to hire. If the bosses don’t have jobs, then their paid politicians in Washington should be forced to create a government jobs program, along the lines of the Works Progress Administration of the 1930s.

The movement of unionized workers, which is struggling against a major assault right now, must expand its reach and its program to demand good jobs with living wages — for all. In that way it can enlist the unorganized, the low-wage workers and the unemployed and build a genuine workers’ united front.

Goldstein is the author of “Low Wage Capitalism.”



Holding their award, from left, are NC HEAT members Seth Keel; Elena Everett, adult advisor; Raul Jimenez and Luis Rangel. Inset photo is Ajamu Baraka.

Black Workers For Justice’s MLK labor banquet

Black Workers For Justice held its 28th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Support for Labor banquet on April 2 at the North Carolina Association of Educators Hall in Raleigh, N.C. Founded 30 years ago, BWFJ has organized mass campaigns for union and civil rights for all workers in the global South, with a special emphasis on African-American and women workers.

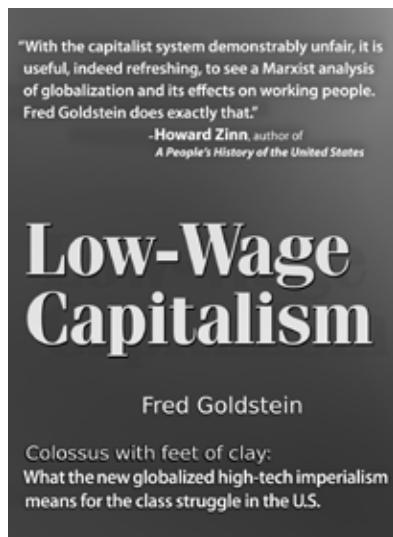
North Carolina has the lowest number of unionized workers of any other state due to repressive “right-to-work” laws that deny public sector workers the right to collective bargaining. BWFJ has a close working relationship with United Electrical Local 150, the NC Public Service Workers Union, which is carrying out organizing drives all over the state among the lowest paid, oppressed workers. Recently the union introduced a historic Mental Health Workers Bill of Rights before the North Carolina state legislature by setting up statewide public hearings.

This year’s keynote banquet speaker

was Ajamu Baraka, executive director of the U.S. Human Rights Network, based in Atlanta. Founded in 2003, the network has documented numerous human rights violations in the U.S. in the areas of displacement, education, unemployment, incarcerations and other issues suffered by the poor and people of color. The network has used language in United Nations international human rights treaties to expose these U.S. violations, which have been systematically downplayed and ignored by the big-business-owned press.

The Self-Determination Award, named in honor of the late Abner Berry, one of the founding members of BWFJ, recognized the contributions made by activists. A youth self-determination award was presented to NC Heroes Emerging Among Teens, a member of the NC Coalition to Defend Education. HEAT has played a critical role in mass actions opposing right-wing efforts to resegregate public schools in Wake County.

— Report & photos by Monica Moorehead



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Latin American labor tour culminates

By Cheryl LaBash

An 11-city national visit of Latin American union leaders culminated on April 1 in Wisconsin, the touchstone of the fight against union busting in the U.S. Within one day the delegation met with immigrant rights community organizers at Voces de la Frontera in Milwaukee and young militants in Madison who had spurred a recent three-week Capitol occupation, and spoke at a public meeting at Madison’s Labor Temple.

The U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange, Union del Barrio and the International Action Center initiated the tour, which was also supported by the World Federation of Trade Unions - Americas Region.

Gilda Chacon Bravo from Cuba represented the WFTU throughout and was joined by Humberto Montes de Oca Luna and Pipino Cuevas Velasquez from the

Mexican Electrical Workers (SME). The U.S. denied a visa to Mexican teachers’ union leader Jorge Cazares, effectively blocking communication with the active student and teacher movement in many U.S. cities.

In city after city, the SME leaders told the story of their 44,000 members, who together with their families were deprived of their livelihood in a night, forced from their jobs by the police and marines on Oct. 9, 2009. This attack was part of the neoliberal agenda of Mexican President Felipe Calderon, who wants unions and any restrictions on capitalist profiteering eliminated and all regulations “liberalized.”

The tour’s theme, “Workers struggle beyond borders, uniting the people of nuestra América (our America),” came alive. According to Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, an anti-union law was needed

there to provide “flexibility.” Even President Barack Obama promotes helping business as the road to ending unemployment and underemployment. It is the same neoliberal program faced by workers in Mexico and the U.S.

A government slander campaign against SME — a union formed in 1914 — portrayed the union as overpaid and inefficient. The government claimed utility rates would go down and service would improve without the union. But when private contractors took over the work at the public Luz y Fuerza del Centro (Light and Power), inexperienced workers died in accidents, rates increased by 33 percent and power outages increased in Mexico City, a megalopolis with 20 million inhabitants.

SME turned this around by uniting with electricity users. Now of every 10 users, only three are paying their inflated

electric bills. Working directly with the community, SME workers solve power outages.

Although many workers took a buy-out, essentially selling their right to their jobs, more than 16,000 workers and their families remain in the struggle, which includes massive occupations of the central square, hunger strikes and a legal and electoral strategy. A current permanent “encampment” in the Zocalo square in Mexico City demands a solution to this conflict and the freedom of SME leader Miguel Márquez Ríos, who is a political prisoner.

Alternative to oppression

Latin American countries are constructing an alternative to neoliberalism and capitalist economic relations that exploit and oppress workers. Cuban leader Gilda Chacon Bravo, the first WFTU lead-

Part of coast to coast April 4 solidarity Workers shut ports

Continued from page 1

and their fight for collective bargaining rights. More than 1,000 actions were held throughout the country, with at least one in every U.S. state.

With only one ship in the Oakland port on April 4 — perhaps because the port bosses got wind of the planned work stoppage — not enough workers reported to work to even unload that ship. “This was a voluntary rank and file action — an organized act of resistance,” said Thomas. “It is significant that the action by Local 10 was taken in solidarity with Wisconsin public sector workers who are facing the loss of collective bargaining.”

Management had suggested that Local 10 use its monthly meeting on April 4 to honor Dr. King, but Local 10 members rejected the proposal, preferring to voluntarily lose a day’s pay. King, who was killed in Memphis while demanding collective bargaining for sanitation workers, had been named an honorary member of Local 10 six months before his death.

“So we’ve come full circle,” Thomas concluded. The Memphis public workers got their union, after a two-month strike. Now 40 years later their Wisconsin counterparts are threatened with losing theirs. But it is Wisconsin’s “fierce resistance that is inspiring all of us today.” In addition to the actions on the docks, thousands of workers took to the streets in the Bay Area on April 4 to support the struggle in

Wisconsin and to commemorate King’s assassination.

Members of the Oakland Education Association attempted to occupy the lobby of the downtown Oakland Wells Fargo Bank to protest bank bailouts in the face of education cuts. The bank locked its doors before the OEA members could enter. At a spirited rally that effectively shut down the bank for three hours, OEA President Betty Olson-Jones said, “We are one with Wisconsin, Ohio and the workers and poor across the country.”

“We Are One” with Wisconsin workers was also the theme of a noon rally called by the Alameda County AFL-CIO Labor Council. More than 1,000 union members representing nurses, teachers, painters, engineers, domestic workers, janitors and others attended. Speakers demanded that the banks and the rich be held responsible for the economic crisis — not the workers.

In the late afternoon, several thousand union members marched through San Francisco’s financial district, stopping at all of the major banks and demanding an end to their massive bailouts at the expense of poor and working people. A final rally was held in front of the Federal Reserve Bank’s San Francisco office.

ATLANTA

About 700 people marched from the King gravesite in Atlanta to the state Capitol building for a rally that featured



March 27, LOS ANGELES

WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

Martin Luther King III. Among the participants were union members from the Teamsters; the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Union; the Service Employees union; the Machinists union; the United Auto Workers; the International Electrical Workers union; UNITE-HERE; the Communication Workers union; and firefighters.

There was a large contingent in support of Georgia death row inmate Troy Davis. People wore “I am Troy Davis” T-shirts and gathered signatures on a petition to the pardons and parole board demanding clemency. The International Action Center carried a banner reading, “Stop the attack on unions! Defend workers’ rights from Wisconsin to Georgia.”

NORTH CAROLINA

More than 300 workers and community members turned out to North Carolina’s legislative building in unity with

demonstrations across the country. North Carolina, which has had a ban on collective bargaining for public employees since the Jim Crow era, is one of the least unionized states in the country. Yet this demonstration, along with others in recent months, shows a trend of renewed strength within North Carolina’s labor movement.

The demonstration was a joint effort by United Electrical Local 150; the N.C. Public Service Workers Union; the North Carolina AFL-CIO; the North Carolina NAACP; the Farm Labor Organizing Committee; People’s Durham; Southerners on New Ground; and Raleigh Fight Imperialism, Stand Together as part of a newly formed Labor, Faith, and Civil Rights Coalition in Defense of the Public Sector. The coalition first mobilized in solidarity with Wisconsin workers two months ago.

The Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, North Carolina NAACP president, affirmed the historic joint struggle of the labor movement and the oppressed. “The demands of the Black freedom movement have always been the same demands as labor, and those that attack the labor movement with lies and propaganda from one side of their mouth, turn around and spread racist hatred with



RALEIGH, N.C.

PHOTO: AJAMU DILLAHUNT



DETROIT

es in Wisconsin

er to tour the U.S., described how the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) has benefited not only the nine member states but has also helped development throughout Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez proposed ALBA, which Cuba and Venezuela initiated on Dec. 14, 2004. Since then cooperative trade between nations has helped meet the needs of the poorest and formerly disenfranchised people.

Operation Milagro restores eyesight to millions. The Cuban-developed “Yo sí puedo” literacy method teaches adults reading and writing in three months. The United Nations reports that illiteracy has been eliminated in Venezuela and Bolivia using this important tool.

Indigenous and Afro-descendant people are formally included in the ALBA decision-making process. The “sucre”

virtual currency is used for international trade without the imperialist dollar and international capitalist banks.

Chacon Bravo invited everyone to participate in the fourth “Union meeting of Our America” planned in Managua, Nicaragua, for August. She characterized this event as a space open to all workers and social movements in the Americas — from Alaska to Patagonia — to discuss the common challenges facing the working class. Then Dec. 2 through 4 the discussion will continue in Tijuana, Mexico, at the Eighth U.S.-Cuba-Venezuela-Mexico Labor Conference.

The U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange, an initiator of this tour, is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. More information and specific city reports are available at laborexchange.blogspot.com, or call 313-318-5159 or 313-355-8566. □



WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN

From left, Pipino Cuevas Velasquez and Gilda Chacon Bravo in San Diego.



April 1, WAYNESBORO, PA

the other side.” Sendolo Diaminah, an education activist and organizer for the lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer group SONG, spoke about the need for unity in the face of divisive oppression: “Queer folks are your neighbors, workmates, and have been in the struggle for justice alongside you. We need everyone in this movement!”

Two recently fired workers that are members of UE Local 150, state mental health worker Rebecca Hart and sanitation worker Kerry Bigelow, addressed the crowd, along with Diego Reyes from FLOC. Local 150 recently fought for and won introduction of House Bill 287, a Mental Health Workers Bill of Rights, into the state House of Representatives, along with Senate Bill 386, a bill to repeal the ban on collective bargaining.

PENNSYLVANIA

Hundreds of students and union members rallied in Philadelphia on April 4 outside Temple University’s Liacouras Center against proposed state cuts in funding for education and in solidarity with workers in Milwaukee, Ohio, Florida and other states under attack from union-busting, pro-business politicians. Participating unions



WW PHOTO: JILL HILL

included the Service Employees union, the Letter Carriers union, AFSCME, the Transit Workers Union, the American Federation of Teachers, the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers and the Temple University Graduate Student Association. Speakers addressed the significance of King’s support of Memphis sanitation workers’ right to unionize in light of anti-union attacks today.

Earlier in the day, city workers staged a break-time walkout, standing outside municipal buildings with signs against the proposed cuts and the Philadelphia city administration’s refusal to bargain in good faith with their unions.

In a truly united effort by labor, more than 700 workers and community supporters from the United Electrical union, the Steel Workers union, TWU, AFT, the Food and Commercial Workers union, UNITE-HERE, the Mine Workers union, SEIU, Citizens Against Marcellus Pollution, the Sierra Club and others rallied in Pittsburgh as part of the “We Are One” rallies on April 4.

An opening rally was held in front of the EQT energy company, one of Pennsylvania’s most notorious natural gas, shale fracking companies. EQT has made hundreds of millions of dollars in profits with-



WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

out paying any taxes. Meanwhile, public transportation fares have recently been jacked up by 25 cents while several routes and services in general have been cut.

The crowd then marched down the street to Gov. Tom Corbett’s office building. Corbett recently released his budget proposal, which included major job cuts in mental health, education and other services, including a 50 percent cut from several state universities. Marchers occupied the lobby of Corbett’s office while chanting, “They say cut back! We say fight back!”

NEW YORK CITY

Several thousand unionists and supporters joined an after-work rally near City Hall in downtown Manhattan called by the Communication Workers union. Speakers emphasized that Wisconsin and New York workers have a lot in common. Even though Wisconsin’s Gov. Walker is a Tea Party Republican and New York state’s Gov. Cuomo is a Democrat, one speaker said they are both attacking workers and blaming unions for their state’s economic problems. And both are trying to solve problems by imposing draconian cuts and layoffs.

Another speaker mentioned New York state’s Taylor Law, which makes it illegal for public sector workers to strike. “When you combine this with the hailstorm of imposed cuts and new work rules, it’s pretty much the same as eliminating collective bargaining,” he said.

Many rally participants expressed shock when they heard that New York banks get \$25 billion each year in tax-free interest on bonds from the city and the state governments as well as public agencies that manage public transportation, bridges and tunnels.

Dave Welsh, Judy Greenspan, Andy Koch, Cheryl LaBash, Dianne Mathiowetz, Betsey Piette and Dee Knight contributed to this article.



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO



WW PHOTO: BRYAN G. PFEIFER

Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row:

On Libya

Taken from a March 29 audio message. Go to www.prisonradio.org to hear Abu-Jamal's audio columns and www.millions4mumia.org for updates on the struggle to free him.

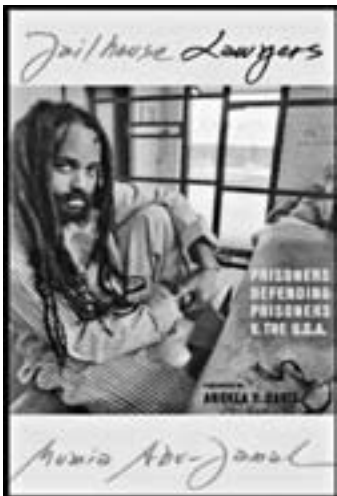
And like that — blink — a new war. Just as the Arab spring erupted across the region of Mediterranean Africa and people took to the streets in opposition to their sclerotic kleptocratic rulers, the West has thrust its large nose into the tent and, voila, a new war has emerged — blessed by both the U.N. Security Council and the Arab League.

Oh, they're using euphemisms like no-fly zone and protecting civilians, but those of us with a little memory can recall the decade-long U.S.-British no-fly zone over Iraq, which laid the groundwork for the invasion and disaster that followed. Obama, elected ostensibly as the candidate to pull the U.S. out of at least one stupid war, has, bowing to right-wing and corporate pressure, opened the door to yet another one.

The centers will argue that this isn't the same thing. That it's a no-fly zone, not an attack, and that Libya is no Iraq. In fact, any armed intervention in a nation's war is, well, ... war.

When France joined the U.S. side in the U.S. fight against Britain, it became a combatant at war with England.

A no-fly zone, like a blockade, is an act of war. The gates are open. This war, like Iraq, will result in disaster, and we will look back and wonder how we got here. □



Mumia's book:

Jailhouse Lawyers

**PRISONERS DEFENDING
PRISONERS V. THE U.S.A.**

is available at leftbooks.com

Revolts from Tunisia to Afghanistan disrupt U.S. rule

By Gene Clancy

The historical tsunami that continues to shake the Middle East and Southwest Asia has the apologists and strategists of imperialism scrambling to catch up with events. "We have no permanent allies, only permanent interests" seems to be their slogan, but this "pragmatic" approach is fraught with unexpected dangers and contradictions.

In **JORDAN**, the U.S. has put its hopes on King Abdullah, who has promised preemptive reforms to put a kind face on his brutal monarchy. The imperialists were hoping to avoid the revolutions that have engulfed Yemen, Egypt, Tunisia and Bahrain and that is now troubling neighboring Syria.

The Jordanian regime showed its true character on March 25 when security forces launched themselves into thousands of demonstrators, beating them with sticks, throwing rocks and using water hoses. This led to the first deaths in the uprisings there. The broad-based opposition forces include not only Islamists, but "teachers who want unionization and poor day laborers seeking higher wages." (Time, March 25)

Meanwhile, another U.S. client state, where the U.S. already has more than 100,000 troops and countless mercenaries on the ground, has been racked by protests caused by anti-Muslim activities going on half a world away within the borders of the U.S. Anger over the burning of the Muslim holy book by a Florida-based reactionary religious sect fueled a second day of angry rebellion in **AFGHANISTAN**. Kandahar activists set cars and shops ablaze April 2 in a demonstration in which nine protesters were killed. Earlier a crowd of protesters stormed a U.N. compound in an outpouring that left four Afghan protesters and seven foreign U.N. employees dead.

HAITI

Growing misery leads to growing resistance

By G. Dunkel

Two Haitian public transportation unions — the Owners and Drivers Association and the Federation of Public Carriers — called a one-day general strike March 28 to protest the government significantly raising fuel prices. Gasoline will

The burning of the Qu'ran took place on March 20 under the supervision of Terry Jones, who had promised last September, after backing down from previous threats to burn the Qu'ran, never to burn the Muslim holy book. The action took place the same week that a U.S. Congressional committee launched a vicious attack on Muslims residing in the U.S.

In still another U.S. client state, **YEMEN**, demonstrations reached new heights in size and ferocity. Hundreds of thousands packed a square in the capital of Yemen on April 1. In what appeared to be the largest demonstration in more than a month, protesters pressed demands that the country's longtime ruler, Ali Abdullah Saleh, step down.

Many mosques in the capital shut down — a move unprecedented for Friday, the Muslim day of prayer — as worshipers and clerics streamed to the square outside Sana'a University.

Protesters filled the plaza and spilled out along three adjoining streets. Previous demonstrations have taken up the square and at most two of the streets that feed into it.

The Sana'a crowd was supported by soldiers with anti-aircraft guns and Kalashnikov rifles, who set up half a dozen checkpoints around the square to protect the protesters. Recently more than 50 people have been massacred by security forces.

Women and children, their faces painted in the colors of the Yemeni flag or the word "Leave," joined the protests.

There were also anti-Saleh protests in at least 14 other provinces around the country on April 1. Witnesses said hundreds of thousands of people marched in villages and cities across the nation, but especially in the provinces of Aden, Taaz and Hadramout.

SYRIA, which has historically acted independently from the U.S., has also ex-

perienced widespread protests. The imperialist media have covered them extensively, sensationalizing the violence and downplaying the efforts of the government of President Bashar al Assad to deal with the unrest. Like all countries, Syria has been deeply affected by the worldwide economic crisis.

Assad announced salary and pension increases for state employees, worth an estimated \$800 million for the year 2011. He has also ordered an immediate investigation into the recent deaths of some protesters and the formation of a committee to draft new laws on national security and counterterrorism. (New York Post, April 1)

In **EGYPT**, where continuing demonstrations are keeping the transitional government's feet to the fire, there are diplomatic developments which are worrisome to imperialist interests in the Middle East. At a press conference on March 30, Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil Al-Arabi said that his country would turn over a new leaf in its relations with all countries and with political parties in all countries — including Iran and Hezbollah. He said that Iran is not an enemy state and that Hezbollah is part of the politico-social environment in Lebanon.

Al-Arabi added that Egypt would adopt a different policy vis-à-vis the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip beginning next week.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi welcomed the statements and said that this would help security in the region. (Middle East Media Research Institute [MEMRI], March 30)

These statements represent a complete reversal of the former Egyptian regime's policy, which had been to follow the policies of the U.S. and Israel, especially with regard to the brutal and illegal Israeli blockade of Gaza. □



Pam Africa speaking at the podium.

WWW.PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

An audience-packed room at Riverside Church in New York City on April 3 heard Mumia Abu-Jamal's new legal team speak on the political and legal significance of the almost 30-year campaign to free this world-renowned political prisoner unjustly housed on Pennsylvania's death row. The lawyers who spoke were Christina Swarns, director of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund's Criminal Justice Project, and Judith Ritter, professor at Widener Law School. Pam Africa of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and Suzanne Ross of the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition (NYC) also made presentations.

tioning private systems is collected and dumped into large, open-air, unlined pits. (www.ayitikaleje.org)

The biggest pit in Trutier, a small community north of Port-au-Prince, is very likely contaminated with cholera. It lies over the Plaine Cul-de-Sac aquifer that supplies most of the water used by private companies that bottle and sell water in Port-au-Prince.

Before the earthquake, only 24 percent of the houses in Port-au-Prince were connected to a water supply; the unconnected bought water by the bottle or pail-full from vendors. Water prices in Haiti's capital have been among the highest in the world, according to Simon Fass in "Political Economy in Haiti."

On Jan. 29 Haiti's Ministry of Public Health and Population reported that the number of new cholera cases, either hospitalized or treated in a clinic, has fallen dramatically. Doctors Without Borders is closing some of its clinics. But sanitation is still woeful in Haiti; the excreta pit in Trutier is just the worst example.

A March 16 article in the medical journal The Lancet claims U.S./U.N. projections are far too low. It asserts there will be "779,000 cases and about 11,100 fatalities in the next eight months." Expensive antibiotics will be necessary to avoid such

Continued on page 10

CIA & MI6 in Libya

U.S.-British covert operations exposed

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

The New York Times, the Washington Post and other corporate news sources are now openly admitting that the opposition forces fighting the Libyan government are supported and coordinated by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and Britain's MI6 with in-country special forces.

President Barack Obama in March signed an order dispatching CIA operatives to identify targets for bombing and to vet potential leaders within the rebel forces in the event of toppling the Libyan government.

Al Jazeera says in a recent article that both U.S. and Egyptian Special Forces are providing training to the rebel groups at a secret facility in eastern Libya. This adds greater clarity to the insistence on the part of the Obama administration that the current leader of Libya, Moammar Gadhafi, be forced from office. The U.S. wants a compliant regime in control of this oil-rich North African state of more than 6 million people.

Egypt's military receives in excess of \$1.5 billion a year from the U.S. for training, equipment and cooperation with Washington. An unidentified rebel fighter described being trained in military techniques by U.S. and Egyptian military forces.

"He told us that Thursday night (March 31) a new shipment of Katyusha rockets had been sent into eastern Libya from Egypt. He didn't say they were sourced from Egypt, but that was their route through. He said these were state-of-the-art, heat-seeking rockets and that they need to be trained on how to use them, which was one of the things the American and Egyptian special forces were there to

do." (Al Jazeera, April 4)

The fact that the rebel forces are receiving arms and training from U.S., British and Egyptian intelligence and military units illustrates the hypocrisy of the naval blockade being imposed on Libya, under the guise of an arms embargo. The only arms embargo is against the Libyan government, while the imperialist states and their allies in the region are free to provide air and sea support for the rebels.

While Al Jazeera has been supportive of the military and political campaign against the Libyan government, it was forced to admit on April 4 that "since the rebels appear to be receiving covert support in terms of weaponry and training, it is not surprising that they are not inclined to criticize NATO openly."

U.S. cover story falls apart

The Obama administration claims it does not know who the so-called "rebels" are in Libya. But Khalifa Haftar, officially appointed leader of the military campaign against the Libyan government, has for many years been financed and supported by the CIA. For two decades he lived in Virginia near CIA headquarters in Langley.

A report by the right-wing Jamestown Foundation declares, "Today as Colonel Haftar finally returns to the battlefields of North Africa with the objective of toppling Gadhafi ... he may stand as the best liaison for the United States and allied NATO forces in dealing with Libya's unruly rebels."

This same study revealed that Haftar played an important role in June 1998 in establishing the so-called Libyan National Army, the military wing of the National Front for the Salvation of Libya "with strong backing from the Central Intelli-

gence Agency." Not only did the CIA set up the LNA but it also created a training camp in Virginia where members of the group were taught counterinsurgency and destabilization tactics by the U.S. government.

The Nation magazine, in an April 3 article entitled, "The CIA, the Libyan rebellion, and the president," concludes, "An event that Americans were led to believe was an autonomous rising on the model of Egypt turns out to have been deeply compromised from the start, and compromised by American meddling. All the external parties are in Libya for different reasons. Things could not have gotten this far without the CIA."

The CIA and Africa

While the first clandestine operations of the CIA were directed against leftists in Europe after World War II, it soon focused on weakening oppressed nations, national liberation movements and socialist states. In 1953, the CIA engineered a coup against Mohammad Mossadegh, the elected leader of Iran, who had tried to nationalize the oil industry for the benefit of the people. He was replaced by the Shah, a U.S. puppet, who was finally overthrown in 1979.

The CIA was behind the 1954 overthrow of the progressive Arbenz government of Guatemala. In Cuba in 1961, CIA-trained exile forces landed at the Bay of Pigs in an attempt to topple the revolutionary government of Fidel Castro.

In 1966, the CIA was behind the destabilization and overthrow of the Pan-African and socialist-oriented government of President Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana. Nkrumah had supported national liberation movements throughout Africa and the world and formed close relations with the

Soviet Union, China, Cuba and Yugoslavia.

In 1975, the CIA attempted to prevent the consolidation of national independence in the oil-rich Southern African nation of Angola. Agency operatives aided the racist South African Defense Forces and the counterrevolutionary UNITA and FNLA movements. Angola finally was liberated in 1994.

Importance of anti-imperialist perspective

An important role of the CIA has been to foster chaos in order to destabilize and overthrow governments in countries where U.S. imperialism wanted to intervene to protect its strategic interests. Thus it has a long track record of fomenting disinformation and psychological warfare.

The corporate media are always ready to build public support for U.S. imperialist aims and objectives, both domestically and internationally. As Washington sends the CIA, stealth bombers and "Tomahawk" missiles to engineer regime change in Libya, the media have framed this as an act of humanitarian relief designed to protect civilians. They have little to say when Libyans die and property is destroyed.

It is the duty of the anti-war and peace movements in the U.S. and throughout the Western industrialized countries to expose the role of the CIA and other intelligence services and uphold the right of oppressed, post-colonial and revolutionary governments to self-determination and sovereignty.

Any other approach strengthens the imperialists and their intelligence and military apparatuses. It only delays the struggle for international solidarity of the workers and oppressed inside the U.S. and around the world. □

'Lion of the Desert'

A film about Libya's resistance to colonialism

By **Deirdre Griswold**

Now is a good time to watch, either again or for the first time, the powerful 1981 film "Lion of the Desert." It tells the story of Omar Mukhtar, a legendary leader of the armed resistance to Italy's colonial conquest of Libya.

Starring Anthony Quinn and Irene Papas, the film is a drama based on historical fact. It includes documentary footage the Italian government shot of the immense concentration camps they set up and the planes they used to strafe and bomb the Libyan people. "Lion" was directed by a Syrian, Moustapha Akkad.

Italy declared Libya its colony in 1911, during the mad scramble by Western capitalist powers to grab new territories before the first inter-imperialist world war broke out in 1914.

From 1911 until 1931, Mukhtar, a teacher of the Qu'ran who had earlier participated in resistance to the French colonizers in Chad, led the guerrilla struggle in Libya against the Italian Army. His mobile bands of horsemen outflanked and outwitted armored columns, scoring many victories as Italy's newly developed desert tanks floundered in the loose sand.

So successful in combat were the freedom fighters that by the late 1920s, after Mussolini's fascists had come to power in Italy, the occupiers decided to cut off the guerrilla forces from their source of support by rounding up a million villagers and forcing them into huge, barbed-wire-enclosed concentration camps. Many died from disease, brutality and starvation.

The Italian military used airplanes in 1911 for surveillance, a year later to drop bombs, and then against civilians in Libya, all for the first time. The air war helped turn the tide in favor of the oppressors. Mukhtar was captured in



1931: Italian colonialists take Mukhtar captive at age 73, then execute him.

battle in 1931, quickly "tried" by a colonial court, and within days was hanged in front of his people, who were forced to witness his execution inside one of the camps. He was 73 years old.

Unfortunately, because of the way Hollywood does things, there are no Libyans or other Arabs in leading roles in the film. However, Quinn, a great actor of Mexican-Irish descent, plays the role of Mukhtar

with strength, sensitivity and skill. Papas, who is Greek, is also very moving as a woman who loses her husband and small son to the colonizers' brutality. "Lion of the Desert" is easily available on DVD.

In 2009, in a pointed reminder of this history, Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi wore a photograph of Mukhtar on his chest while on a state visit to Rome. He also brought Mukhtar's elderly son with him. □



Available from **Leftbooks.com**

GAZA: Symbol of Resistance

A book of articles from WW, edited by **Joyce Chediak**

The compelling story of how Gazans withstood blockade and bombardment only to stand tall, refusing to give up the right to determine their own lives and to choose their own government; how Gaza's courage inspired a worldwide solidarity movement determined to break the blockade and deliver aid; exposes the forces behind the punishment of Gaza, and how a growing people's media is breaking the mainstream media's information blockade on this event.

From April 9 to May Day

Whenever people around the world are being bombed, shot or having their land occupied just because rich imperialists want what their country has, it's the right time to get out in the streets and protest. Right now, that includes showing our solidarity with the people of Libya as well as Afghanistan and Iraq. They're all resisting the Pentagon and NATO, the military machines of the big corporations and banks that want to dominate and plunder the world.

So Workers World will be marching on April 9 in New York and April 10 in San Francisco at the demonstrations called by the United National Antiwar Committee. Hope to see you there.

But imperialist war is not our only problem. In fact, these unprovoked attacks on other countries come from the same source as our growing problems at home. Even as the government spends hundreds of billions of dollars on a permanent warfare state, it is dismantling every service that workers here have depended on to protect them from the ravages of unbridled capitalism.

"Unbridled"? Yes, that's what we're seeing today. The immensely wealthy capitalist class of the United States feels no restraints. These billionaires have created a tame political system of two parties that let them do pretty much what they please. They have all the money but they barely pay taxes — even though that is bankrupting the country. Their voice is the voice of the major media — we hear what they want us to hear and little more. They can get away with laying off millions of workers, cutting the pay of those working to below subsistence level, sometimes not even paying wages at all — especially if the workers are vulnerable, super-exploited immigrants.

This capitalist system is in a protracted crisis and the rulers know only one thing to do — make the workers pay for their crisis.

And it's not just in this country — it's all over the capitalist world.

Can these super-rich predators get away with it? The workers and students of Wisconsin don't think so. They've come up with new, militant tactics and strategies to fight for their rights. They didn't wait for the politicians to tell them it was OK. They sat in the Capitol and are still fighting. That's what the workers did in the Great Depression of the 1930s. They fought for and built the unions that are so challenged today.

Six years ago, on May 1, immigrant workers took the lead in reviving this fighting spirit. They streamed out of their neighborhoods by the millions and marched through all the major cities demanding their rights as workers and as immigrants.

In less than a month from now, a May Day coalition in New York will be marching again for immigrant rights and all workers' rights — and to end the imperialist wars that are spreading death and destruction abroad as they bust the budget at home.

May Day is the time for the most downtrodden and exploited to make their strength felt, and they will. It is a time for workers, students and communities to unite and overcome every prejudice meant to divide and send us on the wrong track.

The New York May 1 Coalition, for the sixth year in a row, will be rallying at Union Square at noon. See www.may1info for details.

We'll be there, too. And we'll bring a strong message that all the ills of capitalism demand more than patches and band-aids. We need to build a movement that can uproot this rotten system and build a society motivated not by profits but by the will and desire to satisfy human needs.

Socialism is a dirty word to the right wing. They hate the idea of a society where the wealth belongs to the people. But that's exactly what the world needs. □

Stop imperialist war on Libya

Continued from page 1

Benghazi and the "rebels" are.

France kept its military and its dominance in the southwest, near its colonies Algeria and Tunisia.

And the U.S. military kept Wheelus Air Force base outside Tripoli to dominate the Mediterranean. All these imperialist parasites thrived even further once oil was discovered in Libya in 1955.

But the gravy train ended with the 1969 revolution led by Moammar Gadhafi. U.S., British and French military bases were shut down, oil companies were eventually nationalized. And the oil wealth of the country was used to raise the standard of living of the Libyan people to the highest in Africa.

Big Oil and Western capital want it all back

While the Gadhafi government made major concessions to the Western corporations and oil companies in 2004, these concessions were given grudgingly and always with a price.

For example, Occidental Petroleum and Petro-Canada both had to pay \$1 billion for oil exploration rights. Caterpillar, Coca-Cola, Boeing, Raytheon, Conoco Phillips and Halliburton have all had to make concessions to the Libyan government or have had deals fall through. (New York Times, March 28)

Hedge funds and private equity firms have tried to get their hands on the \$70 billion sovereign state funds of Libya, built up from the oil wealth of the country.

But the former overlords of Libya want it all back.

They want to eliminate all government resistance. They want a compliant, dependent, collaborative puppet regime, such as the National Transitional Council — which can only get to Tripoli, if at all, under the hail of the bombs and bullets of imperialism.

Never has such a naval and air armada been assembled and so much destructive power been rained down on such a small country to foster the progress of such an insignificant and dysfunctional group as the so-called "rebels" of Libya.

Washington spent \$550 million in nine days sending "Tomahawk" missiles, moving seven ships and dozens of bombers and fighter planes into the Mediterranean and guiding the entire air war. The Pentagon never carried out a single mission for "humanitarian" purposes unless it was a cover for promoting U.S. imperialist interests.

Right now, this first attempt at shock and awe from the air has failed. The "rebels" resemble the gang that could not shoot straight. While Barack Obama was giving an interview on NBC-TV to Brian Williams saying that the "noose was tightening around Gadhafi," the rebels were running in disarray from government forces. They had advanced under cover of "Tomahawk" missiles. Once the missiles stopped, the "rebels" were quickly dispersed.

Their "high command" consists of a trio of rivals who almost came to blows with one another after the retreat of the pro-imperialist "rebels." The trio, including a retired general, Khalifa Heftar, an exile flown in from Virginia, "behaved like children," according to a member of the council's political committee. (New York Times, April 4)

Right now Washington and NATO have to recalibrate their efforts. The word "stalemate" is appearing more and more in the capitalist press. The Western imperialists have carried out an adventure and called for "regime change" in the name of democracy, but their contradictions are piling up.

Washington supports the bourgeois/feudal monarch of Saudi Arabia, where hands are cut off as routine punishment, women are treated like property, and the royal family rules. It supports reactionary oil monarchies in Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates — all creations of imperialism in the first place. So-called

"dictatorship" has nothing to do with the bloody assault on the Gadhafi government.

The real purveyors of massacres

Every word spoken by President Obama and all the heads of NATO about "preventing massacres" and protecting civilians are utter falsehoods spoken by governments that have brought nothing but the greatest death and destruction to countless civilians in modern history.

Washington killed a million and a half Iraqi civilians, including half a million children, in 10 years of sanctions. It then killed another million in the second Iraq war, displaced 3 million more and destroyed the civilian infrastructure of the economy.

The Pentagon massacres civilians with regularity in Afghanistan, using Predator drones and other gunships. It pays for every bullet, missile, tank and helicopter used by the Israeli settler state for the destruction of Palestinian homes, orchards, buildings and for use in "collective punishment" against civilians — not to mention the massacres carried out during the war on Gaza.

Washington supports death squads in Colombia that kill trade union and peasant leaders, as well as the wholesale murder of villagers. Its record of sponsoring mass murder in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala is well known.

How can the power that dropped atomic bombs on the heavily populated cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, firebombed Tokyo and dozens of other cities in Japan, as well as Dresden, Germany, suffocating and burning hundreds of thousands of people, possibly be concerned with protecting civilians?

NATO: the gang of colonizers

NATO represents the powers that colonized, tortured and enslaved Africa, East Asia, India, Indonesia, Southeast Asia and Latin America as well as the Middle East — the powers that divided the globe for profit. These powers still have their banks, their oil companies, their mining companies, their drug companies, their construction companies and every imperialist, super-exploiting corporation spread around the world sucking the wealth and resources out of their former colonies.

These are the powers now flying sorties over a former colonial country and dropping 2,000-pound bombs, 500-pound bombs, firing "Tomahawk" missiles and using gunships to pound government forces, under the guise of humanitarianism.

They have mobilized world opinion by repeating big lies over and over again. But no one should believe for a moment that the greatest robbers and plunderers on the planet would spend so much treasure and risk such an adventure for anything other than what they have been after since colonialism and imperialism came into existence — loot!

To illustrate the point, the U.S. just sent Ali Tarhouni to Benghazi to be appointed finance and oil minister of the "rebel" regime. Tarhouni spent 36 years in exile in the U.S. and since 1985 has been teaching at the University of Washington Foster School of Business in Seattle where he became a senior lecturer in microeconomics.

Tarhouni is now managing the process of setting up oil exports from eastern Libya to Qatar. Tarhouni has also been present at several "post-Gadhafi" conferences in Washington and London over the years.

The worst possible outcome of this intervention would be the return of imperialism to rule over Libya. Such a result would be the most reactionary result possible. It would open up the Libyan people to intense exploitation and complete domination by the world's most powerful monopolies of the type that they suffered before the 1969 revolution. It would give the corporations and NATO a presence in the southern Mediterranean and increase the threat to North Africa.

Every effort should be made by all progressive and revolutionary forces to stop imperialist intervention in Libya, now. □

HAITI: Growing resistance

Continued from page 8

a staggering death toll, the article noted.

Given that over a million are still homeless, just improving the Haitian people's access to clean water and sanitation will take a major struggle and big investments. While 50 countries announced big donations, the percentage of their aid actually delivered to Haiti ranges from 25 to 100 percent. (Office of the U.N.'s Special Envoy)

The U.S. promised to give Haiti \$1.15 billion for reconstruction but only \$120 million has arrived. Promised aid from France, Haiti's former colonial power, is also in arrears. (Mother Jones, Jan./Feb. 2011)

More important than the U.S.'s undelivered aid is its direct inter-

ference in Haiti's internal affairs. In November 2010, after ignoring the U.N. which has occupied Haiti for eight years, the Haitian government held an election widely considered fraudulent. Then the big boss stepped in. On Jan. 30 Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton went to Haiti to tell the government which first round candidates qualified for the runoff.

On April 4 the Haitian government announced that Michel Martelly won the March 20 runoff for president. □

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IVORY COAST

French military tries to impose ‘regime change’

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

April 4 — For the second time in two weeks, French President Nicolas Sarkozy has launched military operations aimed at overthrowing an African government. This latest was a military assault against President Laurent Gbagbo’s government in the Ivory Coast. Gbagbo has rejected the results of a disputed run-off election held last November as well as calls from the West and the regional organization ECOWAS for him to step down.

On March 19, France started the aerial bombing campaign against the North African state of Libya, which is designed to topple the government of Moammar Gadhafi. The pretexts for both military actions are United Nations Security Council resolutions ostensibly designed to protect civilians and carry out humanitarian efforts.

In the Ivory Coast capital, Abidjan, U.N. so-called peacekeeping forces have conducted air strikes against military units still loyal to President Gbagbo and have attacked the presidential palace. Following a dispute over the elections, various Western countries and their allies within the region have called for settling the conflict by granting opposition leader Alassane Ouattara the presidency. French imperialism has armed and

trained the militia that backs Ouattara.

Gbagbo, the incumbent president, has rejected the legitimacy of French and U.N. involvement in the current dispute over the results of the national elections. He has accused France of imperialist ambitions to control its former colony and earlier had requested the establishment of a coalition government with Ouattara.

Eyewitness accounts of France and the U.N.’s April 4 attacks say helicopters fired at least four missiles at areas purportedly controlled by Gbagbo supporters. Hamedou Touré, spokesperson for the U.N. unit in the Ivory Coast, used the same line of argument as that used to justify imperialist intervention in Libya, claiming the Gbagbo army was using “heavy weapons against us” and that the U.N. forces had to “protect innocent lives.” (Telegraph.co.uk, April 4)

French military stationed in Ivory Coast

Reports indicate that France already has a military force of 1,650 troops in Ivory Coast. A BBC news report said that French forces shelled the presidential palace on April 1.

Although the French forces are nominally a part of the U.N. peacekeeping mission to the country, Paris has announced it recently bolstered its troops by another 450 soldiers. French military forces re-

portedly took control of the airport outside Abidjan on the evening of April 2. A nation of over 20 million people, Ivory Coast is the world’s largest producer of cocoa.

France ruled Ivory Coast as a colony from 1893 to 1960. After its independence, the Ivory Coast’s dominant political forces maintained close relations with Paris for nearly four decades, and the country was part of the French economic zone.

The U.N. and French forces are bolstered by the military units controlled by Alassane Ouattara, who says that he has 9,000 fighters under his command. The commanding officer of the forces loyal to Ouattara said on April 4, “We know when it starts it could take 48 hours to properly clean (the city).” (Associated Press, Reuters, April 4)

France continues military role in former colonies

This is by no means the first time that France has intervened in the internal affairs of its former colonies in Africa. During a 2009 rebellion in Gabon, an oil-rich, pro-Western state, France sent its military units into the streets under the guise of protecting the lives of its nationals living and working inside the country.

The French military maintains permanent bases in various parts of West Africa. In Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa,

the French share a military outpost with the U.S. The Pentagon has its Africa Command (Africom) forward operating center inside Djibouti.

France and the U.S. collaborated in initiating the current war against Libya, where they and Britain carried out more than 1,000 bombing missions within two weeks. In Ivory Coast, both the Barack Obama and Sarkozy governments have demanded the removal of Laurent Gbagbo.

Although France and the U.N. have a strong presence in Ivory Coast, a massacre of hundreds of civilians between March 28 and March 30 in the western cocoa producing town of Duekoue has drawn international attention to the ongoing conflict. The International Committee of the Red Cross reported on April 1 that “800 people had been shot to death” in the town. However, the U.N. said that the death toll was 330 as of April 1. (cnn.com, April 4)

U.N. deputy human rights director, Guillaume Ngefa, said that the massacre occurred during an offensive led by the military forces of the French and U.N. supporting Ouattara. Nonetheless, the Ouattara forces said that “it firmly rejects such accusations and denies any involvement by the Republican Forces of Cote d’Ivoire in possible abuses.” (cnn.com, April 4) □

Honduran Resistance organizes general strike

By **Heather Cottin**

All sectors of Honduran society are in resistance. Since the late February National Assembly of the Honduran National Front for Popular Resistance (FNRP) held in Tegucigalpa, a month-long teachers strike, a mass demonstration of the Garifuna (Black) community, a one-day general strike, and peasant and Indigenous mobilizations have shown that Honduras is at a crossroads.

An “Intermediate Assembly” of 150 delegates, selected from the 1,500 delegates at the National Assembly, supported these struggles and made the historic decision at the end of March. It decided to guarantee that the leading National Executive Commission of the FNRP will have equal representation of women and men, including representatives from the Original People (Indigenous), Garifuna and lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer communities.

Lucy Pagoada, a Honduran-U.S. participant at the Intermediate Assembly, told Workers World, “This decision was a revolutionary moment. We created a new system, and the people selected were true leaders.”

FNRP leader Juan Barahona said, “The struggle is against the coup leaders and the government of the dictator Pepe Lobo. We will not back down until we bring down this coup regime.” (AP, April 1) Lobo’s election in November 2009 was organized with the complicity of the U.S. government and the regime of Roberto Micheletti, who replaced the legitimate government of President Manuel Zelaya through a military coup in June 2009.

On March 26 police in the capital of Tegucigalpa beat Garifuna Resistance leader Miriam Miranda, the leader of Ofraneh, the Afro-Honduran organization. That



WW PHOTOS: HEATHER COTTIN

The national assembly was held on Feb. 26 and 27 in Tegucigalpa, Honduras by the National Front for Popular Resistance (FNRP).

day thousands of people surged into the streets to commemorate the 214 years since enslaved people fled the island of St. Vincent to take refuge in Honduras. Miranda emerged from the hospital on April 1 to lead the Garifuna commemoration of their culture known as the “Month of Our Inheritance,” with 214 drums beating a revolutionary cadence.

The 150 delegates of the Intermediate Assembly, which includes representatives from all of Honduras’ departments, elected Miranda to the new National Executive Commission of the FNRP.

The assembly also gave overwhelming support for the beleaguered Honduran teachers who face a new anti-union law. Honduras’ teachers have been on strike for a month, demanding six months of back pay. The teachers have been “the backbone of the resistance,” said Pagoada, a New York City teacher herself. She explained that the Lobo government is attempting to privatize education in order to break the Honduran teachers unions.

“The whole country is mobilized against this law that aims to privatize the educational system. Parents and students



are occupying schools,” said Pagoada. Teachers are facing brutal repression. A police tear gas canister killed a teacher on strike, Ilse Ivanic Vásquez. The armed forces have occupied the teachers college.

“In this fascist government there is no room for dialogue,” said Jaime Rodríguez, president of the Honduran Federation of Teachers Organization. “The only way is to mobilize people.” (AP, April 1)

The Intermediate Assembly called for a general strike for March 30, which was successful in every municipality. The Lobo government reacted by sending in the Honduran police to attack teachers, students, workers, farmers and organizations demanding better education, an increase in the minimum wage and protesting against fuel price hikes. (NPR, April 1) The Resistance plans another shutdown for April 12.

‘Constituyente’ and Refoundation

The Intermediate Assembly is also working on what they call the “constituyente,” which will take up the concept of

“refoundation” for the entire country. The “constituyente” was the plan Manuel Zelaya was working on to rewrite the repressive 1982 Constitution when he was overthrown by the military coup in June 2009.

In the 1980s, U.S. military spending in Honduras increased tenfold. U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte worked with Honduran Gen. Gustavo Álvarez Martínez, who trained at the infamous School of the Americas. Martínez ran the death squads in Honduras. The Pentagon used Honduras as headquarters for its control of the Contra war against the Nicaraguan Sandinistas and the anti-revolutionary military campaigns against the popular struggles in El Salvador and Guatemala.

The 1982 Constitution provided formal legitimacy for the Honduran oligarchy. The Resistance is focusing in the coming months on preparing a new government structure. By June the Intermediate Assembly forces plan to have a working document to submit to the Resistance bases in all 18 departments.

The 1982 Constitution maintains the power of the owners of Honduras’ “latifundios,” the huge farms carved out of the Indigenous peoples’ lands. Peasant organizations, especially COPINH, led by Berta Cáceres and representing the Indigenous or Original People of Honduras, are especially concerned. The peasant resistance leaders want more than land reform. They are calling for nothing less than “Land Revolution.” They want their land back.

“This is the meaning of ‘refoundation.’ The peasants are putting their lives on this. The people feel they have the right to the land. The refoundation means everything has to be new. We want a different society, and power must come from the bottom,” Pagoada said. □

Posturas reaccionarias y recortes despiertan resistencia en la clase obrera

Por Fred Goldstein

Las manifestaciones masivas y la ocupación del Capitolio en Madison, Wisconsin, señalan el final de tres décadas de pasividad por los sindicatos. Esta lucha ha despertado un nuevo activismo, una resistencia y una solidaridad del movimiento laboral, de comunidades y de estudiantes que no se ha visto en este país en muchas décadas.

Los banqueros y los patronos continúan avanzando sin descanso en una dirección derechista, anti-obrera y anti popular. Los títeres de las corporaciones en las cámaras estatales de todo el país están empeñados/as en recortar los presupuestos y en atacar a los/as empleados/as públicos/as, la educación y los servicios sociales.

Pero las bases populares se están moviendo en dirección opuesta — en dirección de la resistencia. Wisconsin fue sólo el primer paso. El conflicto creciente entre estas dos fuerzas opuestas de clase se dirige hacia un renacimiento amplio de la lucha de clases.

La intransigencia de quienes recortan el presupuesto está empujando a todos los sectores de las masas en la dirección de forjar una lucha unitaria. Toda la población obrera — empleada y desempleada, organizada y no organizada, joven y de tercera edad, homosexual y heterosexual, discapacitada, inmigrante, documentada e indocumentada — es marcadamente objetivo de esta nueva etapa de austeridad capitalista.

El Washington Post sintetizó esto el 25 de marzo: “Por todo el país, gobernadores/as y legisladores/as se están moviendo para reducir el salario y los beneficios de los/as trabajadores/as gubernamentales a nivel estatal y local, privatizar una amplia gama de servicios e instalaciones públicas, y reducir drásticamente los fondos estatales para programas que anteriormente eran intocables, incluyendo escuelas públicas, universidades y beneficios por desempleo. Pretenden cerrar las brechas en el presupuesto que en total se proyectan en unos \$125 mil millones de dólares el año que viene”.

Planean tomar \$125 mil millones de dólares del pueblo para entregarlos a los bancos y los accionistas que exigen la

devolución de la deuda estatal y municipal. Estos parásitos millonarios y multimillonarios que viven del erario público, fueron rescatados con millones de millones de dólares durante la crisis financiera. Y continúan arrebatando — aún cuando la crisis del desempleo, la crisis de bajos salarios, la crisis hipotecaria, la crisis de hambruna y la crisis en los cuidados de salud aumentan el sufrimiento y las penurias de decenas de millones de personas.

Las protestas y la solidaridad continúan

El gobernador Scott Walker en Wisconsin es su agente. Pero Walker y sus secuaces no contaban con la huelga que por tres días tuvieron los/as maestros/as en Madison, seguida por sus alumnos/as. No contaban con la ocupación del Capitolio por dos semanas. Y los banqueros no esperaban que decenas de miles de trabajadores/as que llegarían desde todos los rincones del país para apoyar la lucha de Wisconsin.

Tampoco esperaban que decenas de miles de sindicalistas y sus partidarios/as se manifestaran en solidaridad en múltiples ciudades por todo el país, grandes y pequeñas, y que a la vez lucharan contra sus propios cortadores de presupuestos.

Las manifestaciones de solidaridad y resistencia han tenido lugar en casas de gobierno y edificios gubernamentales en los estados de Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Nueva York, Illinois, Iowa, Rhode Island y Florida — todas en el último mes. Y no están disminuyendo.

Unas 15.000 personas se manifestaron en Los Ángeles el 26 de marzo, Sábado de Solidaridad. Mahlon Mitchell, el dirigente de la Asociación de Bomberos del Estado de Wisconsin y primer presidente negro de ese sindicato — que ha desempeñado un papel destacado en la lucha — fue uno de los oradores principales en la protesta, junto a muchos otros dirigentes sindicales.

En Nueva York, miles de manifestantes se congregaron el 24 de marzo frente a la Alcaldía y marcharon a Wall Street para protestar los recortes presupuestarios de \$132 mil millones por el gobernador demócrata Andrew Cuomo y para expresar solidaridad con Wisconsin. Aunque es sólo un comienzo, fue importante porque al igual que Los Ángeles, Nueva York es un bastión de

la clase trabajadora multinacional en un estado altamente sindicalizado. La manifestación fue una alianza entre sindicatos, estudiantes y organizaciones comunitarias.

Sindicatos y activistas estudiantiles y comunitarios/as en Wisconsin continúan la lucha después de la aprobación ilegal del proyecto de ley anti sindical de Walker. Los/as maestros/as en el vecino estado de Michigan han sido informados/as por su sindicato que deben comenzar a ahorrar en caso de que se declare una huelga — lo que sería ilegal de acuerdo con la ley anti sindical en Michigan.

Sindicatos se convierten en “centros de organización de la clase obrera”

Nadie puede predecir cómo esta nueva etapa de la lucha va a evolucionar. Lo que es cierto es que Wisconsin ha puesto en marcha una nueva fase de activismo y solidaridad sindical. Por otra parte, activistas y organizaciones comunitarias que han estado luchando por años, conscientemente han identificados sus causas con la de los derechos de los/as trabajadores/as del sector público y los sindicatos. Lo mismo puede decirse de los/as activistas y organizaciones estudiantiles. Todos/as entienden el poder potencial de la clase obrera organizada y se están intentando unir en la práctica.

Este es un paso en la dirección de un concepto más amplio de la lucha de clases. Ojalá que sea adoptado plenamente por los sindicatos, especialmente por los/as dirigentes de base, que buscan construir el frente más fuerte de la lucha.

La dirección para que el movimiento tome, fue recomendada nada menos que por Karl Marx en 1866, en su famoso discurso de la Primera Internacional sobre “El futuro de las Uniones”:

“Aparte de sus propósitos originales, deben ahora aprender a actuar deliberadamente como centros organizadores de la clase obrera ante el magno objetivo de su completa emancipación. Deben apoyar a todo movimiento social y político en esta dirección. Considerándose y actuando como los campeones y representantes de toda la clase obrera, tienen el deber de llevar a sus filas a los obreros no asociados (non-society men). Deben preocuparse solícitas por los obreros de las ramas más miserablemente retribuidas, como, diga-

mos, de los obreros agrícolas, que, vistas las circunstancias excepcionales, se ven privados de toda capacidad de acción. Las tradeuniones deben mostrar a todo el mundo que no luchan por intereses estrechos y egoístas, que su objetivo es la emancipación de los millones de oprimidos”. (Citado en Goldstein, “El capitalismo de bajos salarios”, World View Forum, 2008)

Marx apuntó hacia una visión amplia y global del movimiento sindical, un movimiento social que una las luchas de todos/as los/as explotados/as y oprimidos/as. Esta es la orientación hacia la que todo/a activista y marxista revolucionario/a debe promover.

Esta nueva etapa no es un acontecimiento temporal. Está impulsada por fuerzas profundas. Este autor escribió en “El capitalismo de bajos salarios”: “La globalización, la reestructuración capitalista, las dificultades del capitalismo de bajos salarios y el aumento del racismo y la opresión nacional están creando la base material para una nueva era de rebelión y de unidad de clase. A medida que la clase obrera se empobrece, la proporción de trabajadores/as afro-americanos/as, latinos/as, asiáticos/as, mujeres, lesbianas, gays, bisexuales y trans, ha aumentado. Al mismo tiempo, los/as trabajadores/as blancos/as también se han empobrecido”.

Estas fuerzas reaccionarias están “destruyendo la base de colaboración de clase y compromiso de clase con los patronos. Estos cambios están creando las bases para la construcción de un amplio movimiento de la clase trabajadora que luche por la clase trabajadora multinacional en su conjunto. ...

“Las bases del movimiento obrero se verán obligadas por las nuevas condiciones, de imponerse y ejercer liderazgo en la lucha. Tal movimiento, ya que tiene sus raíces en las comunidades de la clase obrera y los/as oprimidos/as, será capaz de ir más allá del sindicalismo estrecho que se limita a la negociación de salarios y condiciones, y luchará por la justicia económica, social y política en todos los frentes en la lucha contra el capitalismo, y en última instancia, en contra de la misma condición de esclavitud asalariada”.

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COSATU

Condena la ocupación militar imperialista en Libia

Bongani Masuku, secretario de relaciones internacionales del Congreso de Sindicatos Sudafricanos, (COSATU por sus siglas en inglés), publicó la siguiente declaración de parte de la federación sindical el 22 de marzo.

COSATU ha reiterado su posición en apoyo de las legítimas y genuinas luchas de los pueblos y trabajadores/as del Oriente Medio y África de Norte por la democracia, la dignidad humana y la justicia social. Al hacerlo, sin embargo, intentamos ejercer cautela frente a la manera en que los poderes del Oeste aseveran que están avanzando la lucha por la democracia en esa región.

En su propia imaginación, la ocupación militar puede llevar la democracia a las masas. ¿No es la misma doctrina que antes fracasó en Irak, recientemente en Afganistán, y que inevitablemente está destinada a fracasar en Libia? Ésta puede ser mejor descrita como democracia de helicópteros,

la cual deshabilita a las masas en cuyo nombre se libra la lucha por la democracia y las convierte en espectadores mientras que poderes extranjeros se atribuyen a ellos mismos el rol de libertadores.

Está muy claro que la resolución de la ONU encaja en un esquema bien planeado el cual fue deliberadamente establecido por los poderes imperialistas para asegurar la ocupación militar y la reconfiguración regional para avanzar la dominación imperialista y la ortodoxia económica neoliberal con el interés de sacar ganancias a todo costo para sus enormes compañías de petróleo. También tuvo el propósito de asegurar un “cambio de régimen” manipulado que intentó imponer regímenes que mejor sirvan a sus intereses, como fue el caso con [el antecedente presidente egipcio] Hosni Mubarak desde hace muchos años.

La solidaridad internacional no significa la ocupación extranjera ni socavar los derechos soberanos y la integridad territorial de ningún país y pueblos, sino apoyar a las

masas que están luchando por derrocar a un opresor a través de su propia lucha.

El abuso del sistema de la ONU para avanzar los estrechos intereses corporativos de los países del Oeste y sus grandes compañías multinacionales que por demasiado tiempo han estado deseosos de asegurar para ellos mismos las reservas enormes de petróleo e hidrocarburos en esta parte del mundo, desacredita la reputación de la ONU en los ojos del mundo. Son especialmente repugnantes las pautas de doble criterio del Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU y de la Corte Penal Internacional.

El mundo todavía está esperando una acción en cuanto a las acusaciones por crímenes de guerra contra Israel después de los descubrimientos del Reporte de Goldstone, y no hemos visto nada, excepto la obstrucción continua de los Estados Unidos, con apoyo total de la Unión Europea, de cualquier resolución que intenta hacer responsable a Israel.

A este respecto, creemos que la honestidad de la ONU al tratar de problemas globales, está en duda. No hemos visto una determinación semejante al tratar con déspotas en Yemen, Arabia Saudita y Bahréin, donde el pueblo está siendo asesinado y encarcelado por manifestarse pacíficamente, donde se han declarado estados de emergencia y fuerzas extranjeras han sido llamadas para reforzar a los gobiernos contra las actividades pacíficas en pro de la democracia. ¿Podría esto ser explicado por el hecho de que las provisiones estadounidenses de petróleo son garantizadas por la existencia de los déspotas que gobiernan estos países, al igual que la presencia de bases militares estadounidenses en esta parte del mundo?

Desde el Sahara Occidental a Palestina y Libia, la ocupación extranjera militar y política está mal y debe ser combatida con toda la firmeza necesaria. Dondequiera que suceda, amenaza y sustituye las luchas genuinas y el rol del pueblo en decidir el futuro de sus países. □